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TEXAS.

BY
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"Kemper County Vindicated," "The Bench and Bar of Mississippi."*

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'Tis not in mortals to command success, but
We'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it.

—ADDISON'S CATO.

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JOHN H. REAGAN.

The distinguished subject of this memoir was born in Sevier County, Tennessee, on the 8th of October, 1818. His education was confined to the advantages afforded by the common schools and an academic course. He immigrated to the Republic of Texas in 1839, and settled east of the Brazos. His first occupation was that of a surveyor of lands, which he pursued until the year 1843. Soon after his arrival in Texas, in 1839, he was engaged in the battles which occurred that year with the Cherokee Indians, and was with General Tarrant in his expedition to the Cross Timbers in 1843. While engaged in the occupation of a surveyor he studied law and, having obtained his license in 1844, he began the practice of his profession at Old Fort Houston, now Palestine, where he still resides.

In 1847 he was elected to the Legislature, and acquired reputation by his energetic advocacy of measures affecting the general interest of the State. In 1852 he was elected district judge and was re-elected to that office in 1856. In 1857 he was elected to the United States Congress from the Eastern District and was re-elected by a large majority in 1859.

Judge Reagan, until 1861, had always been a Democrat of conservative views, but the triumph of sectionalism in the election of Mr. Lincoln upon a platform avowedly hostile to Southern interests caused him to advocate the secession of Texas from the Union and the resumption of her sovereignty as an Independent Republic, and in January, 1861, while still a member of Congress, he was elected a delegate to the State Convention at Austin. He immediately left Washington and took his seat in that body. By request of the members he addressed the convention, and in

an able and pathetic speech presented to it his views upon the great question which was then agitating the country and gave the reasons by which he was actuated in advising that Texas should resume her sovereignty. When the secession of the State was accomplished he was elected a deputy to the Provisional Congress of the Southern States, which was about to convene at Montgomery, and participated actively in framing the Constitution and organizing the Provisional Government of the Confederate States.

Judge Reagan is a man of great tenacity of purpose and firmness of character, and his business capacity is equaled only by the soundness of judgment which directs it. He is a man of intense convictions and unswerving in the pursuit of noble ends by noble means. Mr. Davis had observed these traits of his character while Judge Reagan was a member of Congress, and when he entered upon the Presidency of the new Confederation he immediately selected him as a member of his Cabinet. As Postmaster-General of the Confederate States his services were universally recognized as efficient in the highest degree. Upon him devolved the task of organizing and putting in motion the postal service of a new nationality containing millions of people, and to maintain it amid the march and counter-march of armies, the transportation of hundreds of thousands of troops, the shocks of battle, in the face of invading hosts, in the van of retreating armies, to re-establish captured and desolate lines, and keep open communication with all parts of the Confederacy. How well and thoroughly he accomplished this task belongs to the history of the world, and is known among all civilized men.

He was faithful and true to the Confederacy. He had espoused its cause with all the ardor and sincerity of his nature, and when he accepted a place in the Cabinet of Mr. Davis it was the seal of his unswerving fidelity and devotion. He was true to the Confederate President in all the vicissitudes of his fortune, and was with him at the time of his capture.

He was for some time held a prisoner at Fort Warren, in Boston harbor, and while there counseled the people of

Texas to confer the right of suffrage upon the most intelligent portion of the negroes, which was at that time distasteful to them, and his "Fort Warren letter," as it was called, invoked upon him a torrent of abuse and contumely. They would, however, have gained nothing by the adoption of his views, nor did they lose anything by rejecting them; for, as subsequent events show, the dominant party determined to stop short of nothing but universal suffrage, which, though intended as a policy of revenge, was the most fortunate measure for the South and the most merciful of all Republican acts, since it has given to the South the power of asserting its rights in the National Congress, overthrew the party which forced it upon the Southern people, and has given a Democratic President to the country in 1885.

On being released from prison, Judge Reagan returned to his impoverished home in Texas, and with a brave heart set about providing a support for his family. Having been re-enfranchised in 1872 he was elected in 1875 to the convention assembled for the purpose of conforming the Constitution of Texas, which had been forced upon it by military authority in 1868, to the rights and dignity of the State and the wants of the people. In this assembly he was an able advocate of those fundamental principles and guarantees upon which the future welfare of the State depended, and was the author of the provisions protecting actual citizens and those seeking homes in it from fraudulent claims and forged titles.

In 1874 he was elected from his old district to a seat in the Forty-fourth Congress, and was re-elected to the Forty-fifth, Forty-sixth, Forty-seventh and Forty-eighth, and has been re-elected to the Forty-ninth Congress; and during all this time he has devoted his energies as faithfully to the service of his constituency, to the interest of the Union and to the honor of its flag, as he did to the cause of the Confederacy.

His career in Congress has been particularly distinguished for the ability and constancy with which he has advocated the protection and promotion of the industrial and commercial interest of the country. His Inter-State Commerce

bill, which has been for a long time pending before Congress, is more largely promotive of the interest of the people than all the revenue bills, bills for internal improvements and measures of finance that have ever been invented, and is one of the most important measures ever brought before Congress. For the passage of this bill he has made a faithful and able fight. He has had to contend against the great railroad and steamship companies, all the monopolies and nearly every great monied corporation in the country. But he is still persistent and strenuous in his efforts to accomplish this great public good, and is still hopeful of success through the power of the people; and if he is successful in procuring his bill to be enacted into a law of the land, it will cause him to be designated as a benefactor of his country, and his name to be handed down through the corridors of time, as one whose foresight, ability and perseverance achieved a triumph for the people over the oppressive aggregations of wealth and the monopolies of commerce that will ripen its beneficent fruits for both the present and the coming generations of men.

Judge Reagan is an eminent lawyer and an able practitioner. His calm and penetrating perception, correct judgment and sound "common sense" enable him to grasp and digest a question in all its practical as well as philosophical bearings, and he is an excellent counselor.

His plain, frank and self-possessed manners impress his honesty and uprightness of purpose upon all who come in contact with him, and his well known character engages universal popularity and esteem — the merited rewards of an able lawyer, a faithful officer, a true patriot and a good man.